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Somerville Fire Electrical

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Somerville Fire Chief Kevin W. Kelleher announced investigators have determined the most probable cause of the January 29, 2005 fire at 504 Somerville Avenue Street was electrical. Investigators determined that the point of origin was a pinched extension cord in the bedroom of a rear apartment.

The six-alarm fire started at 7:20 a.m. at 504 Somerville Avenue that housed a barbershop and several apartments and extended to the apartment building next door at 502 Somerville Avenue.

Chief Kelleher said, "I want to acknowledge the excellent fire suppression job the firefighters from Somerville and all the communities that provided mutual aid did. The severe winter conditions made fighting this fire more difficult."

Chief Kelleher said, "Indications are that smoke alarms alerted most residents of these buildings to danger; fortunately no civilians were injured." He added, "Smoke alarms make the difference between life and death. Please make sure the smoke alarms in your home are working today because no one thinks fire will happen to them."

Coan said, "There have already been several fires this winter from 'pinched' extension cords. When extension cords are under rugs, or pinched behind furniture, or bunched up, the likelihood of starting a fire is enormous." A pinched extension cord, or one that is walked on, can create a short circuit that can eventually cause a fire. "Extension cords are for temporary use only and are not designed to replace wiring inadequate for today's modern electrical needs," he added.

The fire was jointly investigated by the Somerville Fire Department and State Police investigators in the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Electrical experts, boiler inspectors from the state Department of Public Safety and code compliance officers in the Office of the State Fire Marshal provided technical expertise to the fire investigation team.

Coan said, "This team investigation brought the necessary expertise together quickly and accurately to determine the cause of this fire."